

Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria: Who to Blame for its Evolution or Who to Rely upon for its Extinction?

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there emerged a group of people from amongst the Muslim Ummah of northern Nigeria. This is the group which calls itself “*Jama’u Ahlis Sunnah lid Da’wati wal Jihad*” which means “The Group of People of *Sunnah* for Proselytisation and Struggle”, but is popularly known as Boko Haram (BH). This group whose stronghold is the north-eastern part of the country understands Islam in a way that differs or even conflicts with the understanding of the majority of the Muslims in the region and the world at large. In the year 2009, BH took up arms against the Nigerian government after alleging that its members been have denied the right to practice their faith and that they are persecuted and massacred by security forces. The conflict continued to expand since then; the group started attacking other Muslims and Christians in schools, markets, mosques, churches and the likes through assassinations, suicide bombings and other means of guerrilla warfare. Later, the group’s attacks spread to the neighbouring countries of Cameroon, Chad and Niger. This conflict which has been raging for about 8 years now has led to the death of tens of thousands of people from among members of the group, security forces and innocent civilians, including women and children. It has also led to the destruction of properties worth huge sums of money and has displaced millions.

Origin of Boko Haram

Albeit the origin of BH as an insurgent group evolved in Nigeria, we all agree that religious extremism which leads to insurgency and violence is an international phenomenon that evolves from time in time in different forms, organizations, epochs, places and names. What brings all the movements of violent extremism into one room is the ideology. The ideology of extremism is

not a new phenomenon in the history of civilizations, ancient and contemporary. When it comes in the name political, social, economic or religious struggle, it is called by that cause. Religious extremism is not peculiar to Islam. All religious beliefs have adherents who, beyond the limits of that belief, become extremist in their ideologies, utterances or actions.

BH ascribes itself to the Islamic faith claiming to be part of the Sunni ideology. However, textual and historical facts in the Islamic literature prove that BH is a heretical extremist group that derails from the actual teachings of Islam in many of its fundamental principles. Thus, it is believed that the ideology of BH originated from a particular fraternity that was built on a corrupted ideology which bluntly opposes the correct teachings of Allah's Messenger (SAW). This is the ideology of the *Khawaarij*. The Khawarij are the ones who legalize the rebellion against the Muslim Ummah and harbour the assumption that the entire Ummah are upon astray and misguidance while they are the ones on the true religion and guidance. In addition, they exercise a stern opposition to everyone who disagrees with their understandings and even go to the extreme extent of rendering lawful his killing, destruction of his property and reputation.

They can vary with time or place or in some of the programs and designs of conducting their religious affairs but their origin remains one and they all converge at their fundamental point of common interest which collectively situates them under the same umbrella of Khawaarij. This sect of the Khawaarij first manifested itself when a group among the Muslims rebelled against Caliph Aliy Bin Abi Talib (RA) after His ascension to the seat of the caliphate consequent to the assassination of Khalifa Usman Bn Affan (RA). This indicates that its manifestation as a religious sect was established during the caliphate of Aliy (RA), despite the fact that the fiery force which paved the path for the sect's manifestation was first ignited during the caliphate of Usman (RA) and this same mayhem eventually became the cause of his death.¹

Before this time, there was no any organization or group during the times of Allah's Messenger (SAW), Abubakar, Umar and Uthman (may Allah be pleased with them). Nevertheless, the sign of its manifestation signalled its appearance since the time of the Prophet (SAW) consequent upon the emergence of such extreme people with strict religious opinions who apparently declared their rebellion against the decisions of the Prophet (SAW), as it was narrated in the following authentic Hadith:

¹ Nasir Bin Abdil Karim Al-Aql, *Al-Khawarij*, p. 5.

“Narrated Abu Sa`id: `Ali sent a piece of gold to the Prophet (PBUH) who distributed it among four persons saying: “I give them so as to attract their hearts (to Islam).” Then a man with sunken eyes, prominent cheeks, a raised forehead, a thick beard and a shaven head, came (in front of the Prophet) and said, “Be afraid of Allah, O Muhammad!” The Prophet said "Who would obey Allah if I disobeyed Him? (Is it fair that) Allah has trusted all the people of the earth to me while you do not trust me?" Somebody who, I think was Khalid bin Al-Walid, requested the Prophet to let him chop that man's head off, but he (the Prophet) prevented him. When the man left, the Prophet said, "Among the off-spring of this man will emerge a folk who will recite the Qur'an but the Qur'an will not reach beyond their throats (i.e. they will recite like parrots and will not understand it nor act on it), and they will renegade from the religion as an arrow goes through the game's body. They will kill the Muslims and spare the idolaters. If I should live up to their time, I will kill them as the people of 'Ad were killed (i.e. I will kill all of them).”²

Though, they do not like to be addressed with the name Khawaarij, same way the Boko Haram dislike to be addressed as such. Upon hearing this Hadith, one is compelled to believe that the Prophet (SAW) was referring to them, and the man referred to in the Hadith is their great-grand father. The ideology of the Khawaarij kept emerging in different places at different periods of time over the course of Islamic history and wherever it emerges, with whatever name, there are some certain characteristics that define it and its followers.

EMERGENCE OF BOKO HARAM IN NIGERIA

Since 2009, the Boko Haram (BH) movement has been prosecuting an insurgency in northern Nigeria which has both grown over time and has come to international attention through kidnappings and acts of extremist and much-militarized acts of violence. Despite claims by the Nigerian government under President Muhammadu Buhari, sworn into office in May 2015 that it is winning the war against BH and has even ‘technically defeated’ it,³ the group continues to mount attacks on security services and civilian populations, and has extended its activities into neighbouring countries.⁴ The strong reaction of regional governments and coordination of

² Bukhari: 3344; and, Muslim: 1064.

³ See Nigeria Boko Haram: Militants ‘technically defeated’ – Buhari, BBC News, Decemebr 24, 2015 available on <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-35173618> accessed on 15/2/2016 at 7:20 am

⁴ As at the 10th of February, 2016, Boko Haram has staged five suicide attacks in Cameroon’s far north in 2016 alone as reported by Vanguard Newspapers on <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/02/608857/> visited on the 10th of February, 2016 at 3:23pm

security forces (including those of Chad, Niger, and Cameroon) may serve to contain the group, but there is evidence that BH has changed tactics in order to ensure its survival.⁵ Indeed, it is possible that the strong security-based response may only serve to fuel further spread and escalation of the phenomenon across the region. The group shows considerable resilience, and even if the security services eventually manage to contain or defeat the group militarily, it is almost certain that it will not be annihilated simply through security measures.

The group's ideology will certainly not be defeated by the security services, and it is important to understand this ideology, as well as the factors that have led to the rise and spread of this group. The area in which BH operates is characterized by poverty, ineffectual governance and corrupt governments, a strong sense of injustice and perceptions of discrimination. Many people believe that the Nigerian government's response to the insurgency has been incompetent and indiscriminate, in particular between 2009 and 2014, and this has largely contributed to radicalization of youth who were caught in the crossfire between BH and Government forces. Indeed, at some point many thought that government's inept handling of the insurgency was the primary recruitment factor for BH. The group also operates in an area in which there is a history of trade and flow of goods and people, and porous borders. These are all factors which may have contributed towards the attractiveness and growth of the group.

In recent years, considerable research has been carried out into the historical background, growth and activities of BH, as well as its metamorphosis from a Nigerian group rooted in a local context into a regional phenomenon. However, many questions remain about the religious context from which the group has evolved, and the path which may potentially have led from radical religious beliefs towards the choice of violent extremism. Understanding this possible path towards violence may help in identifying measures which could be taken to reduce the attractiveness of BH, and could also serve as a means by which religious scholars could challenge the religious justification used to support this particular manifestation of violence. Such understanding may also provide opportunities ultimately for dialogue with BH and other groups drawing inspiration from the same religious bases.

⁵ Members of the group were reported to have disguised themselves as women, lunatics, fruit sellers, members of the community, etc. to infiltrate gatherings and launch suicide attacks. See the Nigerian Defence Headquarter's twitter posts on <https://twitter.com/defenceinfong/status/569946499746029569> which contains posts by the Headquarters on new tactics of BH attacks

Experience shows that where a religiously motivated group has taken a violent extremist path in a specific context, it is likely that other groups or communities with similar radical or orthodox views can be found in the vicinity of the extremist group, possibly taking a different behavioral path in reaction to the same context and factors. It is important to gain a greater understanding of the range of religious motivations that exist in the areas in which BH is established and draws its recruits, in order to identify potential entry points for dialogue.

BH is a violent extremist which, like any other heretical religious movement, is influenced by other religious groups, movements, ideologies, etc. whether it existed in the past or is existing at present; and whether it is seen as right in its course or not. For example, we gave example of the radical man, Zul-Khuwaisirah al-Tamimi, who lived during the Prophet's (SAW) time, as being the father of religious extremism in the history of Islam. Although he was described as physically religious looking by having some physical religious attributes promoted by the Prophet (SAW) himself, this does not qualify him to be mentioned amongst the Prophet's righteous companions. Therefore, in discussing the emergence of BH in Nigeria and the relationship between BH and other Islamic groups in Nigeria, we look into certain attributes which they either share in common or BH is influenced by them to become what it is today. This discussion is based on the premises that experience shows that where a religiously motivated group has taken a violent extremist path in a specific context, it is likely that other groups or communities with similar radical or orthodox views can be found in the vicinity of the extremist group, possibly taking a different behavioral path in reaction to the same context and factors.

POPULAR MUSLIM GROUPS IN NORTHERN NIGERIA AND THEIR INFLUENCES ON BH IDEOLOGIES

Although BH is an independent extremist organization whose ideologies are rejected by the mainstream Muslim faithful, there are convincing facts to prove the notion that most of BH ideologies are influenced by other Muslim groups in Nigeria. This is because, members of BH, amongst both the leaders and their followers, were ordinary Muslims that belonged to various Muslim groups or Schools prior to their allegiance to the BH movement. It is worth submitting here that each of the Muslim groups in Nigeria played its role, positive and negative, in

influencing the BH movement in one way or the other. Most popular Muslim groups in northern Nigeria can be broadly divided into four (4) categorizations, namely: the classical/traditional Islamic scholarship (popularly called *gargajiya*), the Sufi Movement (popularly called *Tariqa*), the *Jama'atu Izalatil Bid'ah wa Iqamatis Sannah/salafi* (popularly called *Izala*) and the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (popularly called *Shi'a*). Each of these groups will be briefly discussed and compared with BH hereunder as to how and to what extent it influenced the BH in adopting its ideologies.

BH and the Traditional Islamic Scholarship

The historical background of northern Nigeria cannot be separated from its traditional Islamic education system which comprises of *Karatun Allo/Tsangaya/Zaure*, all of which involve the long historical heritage of classical educational system for the study of the Qur'an, Arabic and other subjects of the Islamic knowledge. Until the emergence of the formal *Islamiyya* school system which introduced into the region through the influence of *Izala*, majority of the Muslims from northern Nigeria were products of this traditional educational system. Even with the dominance of the *Islamiyya* system, this traditional system still exist and many Muslim families, especially from the rural areas send their children to them. The controversial *Almajiri* system is an example of the persistence of this traditional system.

Researchers believe that until the fall of the Sokoto caliphate and subsequent introduction of the "Western" education system by the colonial imperialists, the northern Nigeria only had this scholarship system in existence. According to Dr. Sulaiman Khalid, the traditional Islamic education in Hausaland is as old as the spread of Islam in the area which began as early as the eleventh century through the deliberate activities of Muslim traders and itinerant scholars as well as migration. By the fifteen century the reputation of some Hausa state capitals as Muslim metropolis was already high enough to attract many students and scholars. According to the "Kano Chronicles", Malams from Senegal arrived in Kano during the reign of Yaqub (1452-1463). A fifteen century ruler of Zazzau appointed a *Malam* from Mali as one of his subordinate chief, which seems to indicate that there was a Muslim scholar community from which to make the choice. About this time also, the neighboring Gao, Djenne and Borno were overflowing with schools and scholars of international repute, and the book market was a flourishing business. It is clear that there must have existed an important class of *Ulama* who were significant preservers

and teachers of Islamic learning and in whom the whole northern Muslim community have confidence.⁶

A typical Qur'anic school is located in a mosque which serves the dual purposes of a place of worship and a school. Most of the schools are however in other places, e.g. special building for the purpose, the verandah or porch of the *Malam* (teacher), under trees, inside compounds, etc. The notion of an entrance examination, which an aspiring student must take before he can enter a given level of the educational system, is foreign to traditional Qur'anic school system. The pupils sit on the mats, bare floor or ground either in a semi-circle or straight line. Each child holds his written wooden slate (*allo*) and recites the verses of the Holy Qur'an. The method of instruction is as follows, the teacher recites to his pupils the verse to be learnt and they repeat it after him. He does this several times until he is satisfied that they have mastered the correct pronunciation. Then the pupils are left on their own to continue repeating the verse until they have thoroughly memorized it. The verse is then linked with the previously memorized verses and in this way the pupil gradually learns by heart the whole Qur'an. At this level, hardly is any attempts made to enable the pupils understand the meaning of what they recite or write. The teacher only pays particular attention to the reading and writing skills of every pupil as well as keep track of his attendance even though no formal registers are kept. The relationship between teacher and pupil is generally intimate and personal. The teacher is always ready to pardon a late-comer if he is convinced that his lateness was caused by some engagement at home. As for disciplinary measures, the long whip is always handy to deal with erring pupils, and leg chains are sometimes used to confine truants to the school premises for a number of days as a punishment.⁷

Although there exist no water-tight division of pupils into classes, three categories of Quranic pupils are distinguishable: the *kotso* (nursery stage), the *tittibiri* (elementary stage), and the *gardi* (adolescent/adult stage). The *kotso* stage consists of children of about four years or even less. They normally come to school in the company of their more elderly brothers and sisters. At this stage the children are grouped together and instructed orally. They learn to recite

⁶ Khalid, S. (2003). "Karatun Allo: The Islamic System of Elementary Education In Hausaland". Accessed from: <http://www.gamji.com/article6000/news6032.htm>.

⁷ Fafunwa, A.B., *History of Education in Nigeria*, (London: Lowe and Brydon Ltd., 1974), p. 62.

the shorter chapters of the Qur'an and are taught some Islamic rituals like ablution, daily prayers, etc. The *tittibiri* stage is where the pupils of about five to fourteen years old start to read the Arabic alphabets. He first learns the reading of unvowelled letters (*babbaku*) of the same short chapters he memorized at *kotso* stage. This is followed by the reading of vowelled letters as well as words (*farfaru*), after which he starts writing the Qur'anic verses on his *allo* while he is guided either by the *Malam* or by some senior pupils in the school. Straight reading is continued with switch-over from pupil's *allo* to loose pages of the text of the Qur'an up to the last chapter. By the time he reaches *gardi* stage, the pupil has in most cases completed the reading of the Qur'an at least once. He also knows some basic principles of Islam. The main task at this stage is to improve the art of reading the Qur'an with a view to committing it to memory. This is usually the last stage of general Qur'anic education. While the step-by-step learning process seems to be universal to Hausa society, the categorization of pupils into *kotso*, *tittibiri*, and *gardi* is not. In Sokoto area for example, only two categories of Islamic pupils are recognized: the '*yan makarantar allo* (elementary [Quranic] pupils) and '*yan makarantar ilmi* (higher Islamic studies students). Often, the education stops here. But if a student wishes to go further, he will proceed to *makarantar ilmi* or school of higher Islamic learning. The *makarantar ilmi* is the school of advanced learning which covers the whole range of Islamic literary, theological and legal education. In most schools, the pupil starts with either treatises or booklets on theology (*tawhid*). This is followed by books on Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqhu*), the exegesis of the Qur'an (*tafsir*), and sayings and traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (*Hadith*). At the stage of studying advanced books of Islamic jurisprudence, some Qur'anic school students embark on learning various branches of Arabic language starting with Arabic grammar followed by Arabic literature. The teaching method is the time-honored one of reading and commentary, in which the teacher reads a passage from a text, then delivers his commentary upon it.⁸

The influence of this traditional Islamic education system on BH in northern Nigeria is the fact that many of the leaders and followers of the BH group were either recruited directly from the system or used to be products of the system in the past, including the founder of the group, Muhammad Yusuf. Another influence is that many *Mallams* that run the affairs of these schools did not attend the formal conventional schools and therefore, they discourage it. Some of

⁸ Lemu, S.A. (1994), "An Approach to the Development of Qur'anic Schools in the Contemporary Society". Paper presented at the National Seminar on Qur'anic Education organized by NTIL, UNICEF, held at Kaduna.

them discourage or even prohibit it on the ground that attending the conventional schools will block the chances of the student who wants to excel in the Islamic knowledge or, the worse notion that it corrupts the mindset and moral values of Muslims being a system introduced by Western missionaries. This notion still remains in the hearts of many Nigerians, *Mallams* and non-*Mallams*, whether they say it out or they conceal in their minds. That is the reason why in states like Borno where this traditional Qur'anic education system is prevalent, the ideology of BH which condemns the "Western" education system is simply accepted by the youths who were recruited into the group. Furthermore, it is from this traditional Qur'anic education system, many researchers believe that the dreaded Maitatsine group that evolved in the 1980s in northern Nigeria.⁹ In recent Nigerian history, the Maitatsine crisis is the closest similitude of BH in terms of striking violence in the name of religion that resulted to the loss of thousands of lives in northern Nigeria. The essence of the point here is to justify the fact that the idea of condemning the "western" education system is popular among many of the orthodox traditional *Mallams* and is not originated by BH.

However, this cannot justify a conclusion that BH originated from the traditional scholarship system since the members were influenced by other groups and were not taught any of the violent ideas of BH when they were students in the system. The traditional almajiri/zaure system of education contributed tremendously in producing the vast majority of the northern Nigerian Muslims who are in confrontation with the BH ideologies and practices and are mostly the victims of the BH atrocities.

BH and the Sufi Movement

The history of the Sufi movement in northern Nigeria is as old as the history of Islam in the region. There are two brotherhoods in northern Nigerian Sufism: the Qadiriyyah and Tijaniyyah orders¹⁰ The Qadiriyyah derives its name after its founder, 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani (1077 - 1166), a native of the Iranian province of Jilan.¹¹ The early spread of the Qadiriyyah was very slow. It was only in the fifteenth century that the order spread significantly beyond Iraq and Syria. At this

⁹ Isichel, E. (1987). "The Maitatsine Risings in Nigeria 1980-1985: A Revolt of the Disinherited" *Journal of Religion in Africa*. Vol. 17, pp. 194-208.

¹⁰ Uthman, I. O., *Introduction to Sufism*, ed. M.A Kareem and M.A Abdul Raheem, Nigeria Certificate in Education Series (Islamic Studies) (Ikere: Ekiti, College of Education), pp. 228 - 235

¹¹ Lewis, B., *The Religion and the People* (New Jersey: Pearson Education, 2009), p. 156

time it became established in India through the work of Muhammad Ghawth (d. 1517).¹² In the seventeenth century, it was established in Istanbul by Isma'il Rum (d. 1631) and in the nineteenth century reached as far as Malaysia and Indonesia.¹³ The order also played an important role in Islamic religious and political life in North Africa. In the eighteenth century, under the leadership of Usman Dan Fodio (1754-1817), the order moved to impose Islam on those practicing traditional religions in the regions that are now Nigeria and Niger, and in the nineteenth century in Algeria the Qadiriyyah fought at length against the French colonialists. The order continues today in various parts of the Muslim world.¹⁴

The Tijaniyyah order was founded by Ahmed at-Tijani about 1781 C.E.¹⁵ He was born about 1737 C.E. in a place called 'Ain madi. His full name was Abu'l-Abbas Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn al-mukhtar at-Tijani al-Hassan, but he was popularly known as Ahmad at-Tijani.¹⁶ *Tijaniyyah* adherents could be found mostly in Senegal among the Tokolor, Wolof, Laghlah, and other groups. It was from there that the order penetrated into Nigeria.¹⁷ The actual date that the order entered Nigeria is not known.¹⁸ Some scholars think that it arrived in Nigeria during the lifetime of its founder, Ahmad at-Tijani.¹⁹ Others say that the brotherhood entered Nigeria during the lifetime of Muhammad Bello.²⁰ On the other hand, Qadir (1981) held that many scholars in Zaria were said to have been active members of the Tijaniyyah order during the *khalifah* of *Malam Hajj*. One such scholar was Umar-al-Wali Ibn Ahmad (1831-1894)²¹ who contributed to the spread of the *tariqah* by writing some works on it.

12. Al-Seyyid, M. K., *Disaggregating the Islamist Movements* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), p. 4

13. Abdul-Quasein, M. *The Ethics of Al-Ghazali - A Composite Ethics in Islam* (City: Central Printing Sendirian Berhad, 1976), pp. 20-22

14. Akindele, K. *Shaykh Uthman Dan Fodio* (Ibadan: Onibonoje Publishers, 1979), pp. 32 - 33

15. Maududi, S. A. A. *Towards Understanding of Islam* (Kuwait: I. I. F. S. O, 1989), p. 42. See also, Shagari and Boyd, *Uthman Dan Fodio*, pp. 24-26.

16. al-Isbaham, A. A. A., *Hilyat al Awliya 'wattabagat al Asfiya*, vol. II (Cairo, Dar al-Kitab, 1933), p. 46. See also Martins, *Muslim Brotherhood of 19th Century in Africa*, pp. 34-37.

17. Nicholas, R. A.: *The Mystics of Islam* (London: Cambridge University, 1914), pp. 23-26. See also, Taofiq and Arthur, *Classical Islamic Philosophy* pp. 20-22

18. Sulaiman, K. O., "An Examination into the Impact of Sufism on Muslim Elites and the Development of Islam in Nigeria" *The Journal of Rotterdam Islamic and Social Sciences*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2013, p. 4

19. Doi, A. R. I. *Islam in Nigeria* (Zaria: Gaskiya Corporation Limited, 1984), pp. 23-25. See also R.A. Adeleye., *The Overview of the Sokoto Caliphate 1879 – 1903* (London, Longman Group Limited, 1981), pp. 30-33

20. Khan, K., *Studies in Tasawwuf*, (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf Publications, 1973), p. 158.

History of Islam and the Emergence of a Muslim Minority," pp. 30 - 33

21. Lewis B., *The Crises of Islam* (London: Orion Books Ltd., 2003), p. 10

These two Sufi orders played a great role in the spread and expansion of Islam and its knowledge in West Africa. Great jihadists who founded Islamic empires were all eminent Sufis. Sheikh Uthman Ibn Fodio and his brother Abdullah who founded the Sokoto caliphate were, for instance, members of the Qadiriyyah order. During the Sokoto *jihad*, they were inspired by the Qadiriyyah, and they attributed their success to it.²² Today, Sufism is generally peaceful and does not have anything to do with BH except that the Jihad of Sheikh Uthman Ibn Fodio which is the maiden Islamic *jihad* in the Hausaland²³ is seen as one of the inspirations for other extreme groups in the region including BH.²⁴ Therefore, the only negative influence of the Sufi movement on BH in Nigeria is that it is the Sufis who first succeeded in the establishment of a caliphate in Nigeria through armed jihad and this historical milestone remains a pride in the hearts on of all Nigerian Muslims, including BH whose clamor and struggle is for the return of this milestone. BH and other Muslim groups in Nigeria always argue that they are pursuing the return of northern Nigeria to the Islamic system built by Ibn Fodio before the emergence of colonialism.²⁵ Therefore, the negative influence of the Sufi movement on the BH ideologies is that the BH declaration of Jihad through *hijrah* and use of arms with the mission of establishing Islamic caliphate in Nigeria only became known and successful through the Sokoto Jihad as led by the Late Shaikh Usman Bin Fodio who was a Sufi.²⁶ In this vain, when the BH came with the mission of establishing a caliphate of Islamic state in Nigeria, it did not come as an unprecedented idea to the Nigerian Muslims.

²² Sulaiman K. O., *Ibid*, FN. 89, p. 10

²³ Parts of Nigeria, Niger and Cameroon

²⁴ Loimeier R., Boko Haram: The Development of a Militant Religious Movement in Nigeria in African Spectrum 2-3/2012: 137-155 available on www.african-spectrum.org

²⁵ See Yusuf's "Tarihin Musulmai" available on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eUQYNucjqUE> visited on 29/2/2016

²⁶ It is believed that Uthman Bin Fodio, His brother Abdullah and his son Muhammad Bello, were all Sufis of the Qadiriyyah order. This is proved by Bin Fodio himself in his famous poem where he declared his total and sincere allegiance to Shaikh Abdul-Qadir Jilani. The original poem was in Fulani dialect and which was translated into Arabic by his brother Abdullah where he said:

يا رب عالم باطن كالظاهر # أجب الذي يدعو بعبد القادر
بركات أحمد في بلاد الله قـد # أمت وجمت عند عبد القادر
يا رب يا متـ فضلا لعباده # صلني بفضلك عند عبد القادر
إن المـسيى لدى الأكابر يلتجى # فلجات عند الشيخ عبد القادر
إن كنت لم أحسن فشيخى محسن # إني لمُنسب لعبد القادر
عزيت ما لأخي وشيخي عجمة # متوسلين معاً بعبد القادر

Quoted in: Al-Ilori, Adam Abdullah, *al-Islam fi Nijeriya wa al-Shaikh Uthman Bin Fodio Al-Fullani*, (Cairo: Dar Kitab al-Misri, 2013), 140 - 144.

However, the above submission does not in any way mean that Sufi movement in Nigeria gave birth to BH or that the BH of today is supported by the Nigerian Sufism. By contrast, Sufi movement in Nigeria is generally believed to be one of the most peaceful and loyal groups to the Nigerian government. Furthermore, the positive influence of the Sufi groups in Nigeria is that the Nigerian Sufism in its entirety condemns the BH movement and that none of the Sufi leaders is believed to have any connection with the BH movement. Similarly, it can be noted that neither late Muhammad Yusuf nor Abubakar Shekau or any of the present BH leaders quotes any of the Sufi scholars in justifying his arguments.

BH and *Jama'atu Izalatil Bid'ah wa Iqamatis Sunnah*

The *Jama'atu Izalatil Bid'ah wa Iqamatis Sunnah* (Izala) was founded in 1978 in the city of Jos, Plateau State by a former army imam, Shaykh Isma'il Idris ibn Zakariya and was registered as a non-governmental Islamic organization on 11th December, 1985.²⁷ Translated into English, the group's name means "Community for the Eradication of (un-Islamic) Innovation and the Establishment of the Sunnah". As the name implies, Izala's main mission is the cleansing of Islam from innovations introduced into it through heretical religious and traditional practices. Izala pursued its war against the Sufi orders vigorously and fiercely. It condemned the Sufi orders severely and called them either innovators (*'yan bid'a*) or outright disbelievers (*kafirai*). Becoming a member of *Izala* (Dan Izala), especially at its early ages meant breaking ties with the mainstream Muslim society,²⁸ including parents, and rejecting all manifestations of allegedly un-Islamic character (Arabic: *bid'a*), including social customary practices such as in wedding and naming ceremonies, mourning customs, etc., as well as discarding every practice not originating from the Prophet (SAW) and his companions.²⁹ Members of the movement broke ties with other Muslims who did not fit into their definition of Islam: they did not associate with them, pray behind them, eat meat slaughtered by them, marry from or to them or even greet them with the Islamic mode of greeting. Furthermore, Izala not only fought against many features of northern

27 Gwadabe, M. M. "Islam, Izala and Boko Haram Dispute in Northern Nigeria: A Historical Perspective" available on https://www.academia.edu/3737857/Islam_Izala_Wahabiyyah_and_Boko_Haram_Dispute_in_Nigeria_A_Historical_Study accessed on 26/2/2016

28 Loimeier R., Boko Haram: The Development of a Militant Religious Movement in Nigeria in *African Spectrum* 2-3/2012: 137-155 available on www.african-spectrum.org

29 This was the norm at the inception of *Izala*.

Nigerian society, but also advocated for substantial reforms by establishing, for instance, modern Islamic schools called *Islamiyya* even in rural areas and by involving women in the Islamic study system and also calling for the political and religious mobilization of women. The *Izala* thus represented an emancipatory program of Islamic reform which offered Muslim women, youth and usually urban, Western-educated Muslims an alternative vision of Islam no longer mediated by established religious authorities.

The foundation or formation of *Izala* was prepared by late Shaikh Abubakar Gumi, who, since the early 1960s, had been leading a bitter struggle against the Sufi orders, which he identified as the major perpetrators of un-Islamic innovations. In 1966, he started to broadcast his exegesis (*tafsir*) of the Qur'an – which he had regularly held in Kaduna during Ramadan in the Sultan Bello Mosque – through Radio Nigeria, Kaduna in order to reach a larger audience all over northern Nigeria.³⁰ At this time he also began publishing contributions in the northern Nigerian daily newspaper *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo*. In 1978, he translated into Hausa his programmatic text *al-'Aqida al-Sahihah bi-Muwafaqat al-Shari'a* (*The Right Faith According to the Prescriptions of the Shari'a*, first published in Arabic in 1972), a polemic against Sufi concepts of the faith, under the title *Musulunci da abinda ke rusheshi* (*Islam and the Things which Lead to Its Destruction*), triggering a broad public debate on the deviations of the Sufi orders. The Sufi orders responded by publishing their own pamphlets defending themselves against Gumi's literary attacks. In the mid-1970s, Sufi scholars also started to broadcast their own radio *tafsir* programs and thus again retaliated in kind. In order to overcome this stalemate, Gumi supported the foundation of a proper reformist organization, the *Izala*, in order to fight the innovated practices of the Sufi orders in each and every town and village of northern Nigeria.

It holds regular preaching (*wa'azi*) at both local and national levels. It organizes Qur'anic recitation competitions at the local, state and federal government levels. It has an organized and uniformed first aid wing called '*Yan Agaji* (helpers) whose duty it is to ensure proper arrangement, provide guidance, assistance and security to the scholars and members of the movement during their regular activities and events. The '*Yan Agaji* has an organized hierarchy of leadership and does not bear arms. *Izala* movement has a television station called *Manara TV*,

³⁰Ibid.

a webpage³¹ and a Facebook page.³² Today, the *Izala* has become the most influential and powerful movement of reform and the most outspoken opponent of the established Sufi orders in northern Nigeria and neighbouring countries. It has a clear hierarchy of leadership from the ward, local, state to the federal government levels and is present in all the 36 states of Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

Though *Izala* is not a violent movement, it shares some things in common with BH. The major among them is the pronouncement of *takfir* on fellow Muslims considered as having heretical ideologies. The idea of declaration of *takfir* in Nigeria was a strange thing until the emergence of *Izala*. Although not all *Izala* scholars and followers are popular in this regard, notable scholars of the *Izala* movement were popular in *takfir*. Now that *takfir* became a common issue, BH members built on this foundation to go even beyond the *Izala* scholars who were selective in their declaration of *takfir* BH went far to the extent of declaring *takfir* on all Nigerian Muslims who do not subscribe to their understanding of Islam. In the opinion of some researchers, Muhammad Yusuf was a member of the *Izala*.³³ However, other researchers refuted this statement on the ground that Yusuf was only a product of Qur'anic school and he never announced that he was a member of *Izala* nor did *Izala* ever recognized him a member. They stated further that Yusuf moved from Qur'anic school to the IMN (Shi'a), to Jama'atu Tajdid al-Islamiy (JTI), to Borno Muslim Forum, to Shabab al-Islam, before he formed his independent group, the BH.³⁴ In any case, it is generally believed that Muhammad Yusuf was, until they parted ways, a disciple of late Shaikh Ja'afar Mahmud Adam who was among the *Izala* scholars.³⁵ Another influence is that both groups share the same ideology of the *Salafi* creed, particularly in ascribing self to Ahlus Sunnah and its prominent scholars such as Ibn Taimiyya and his likes, which explains the reason why BH retained the name "*Jama'atu Ahlis Sunnah*", and named its headquarters in Maiduguri called *Markaz Ibn Taymiyyah*.³⁶ Gwadabe³⁷ quoted Professor Kyari Muhammed as saying "Virtually every member of the *Boko Haram* moved from the *Izala*, making it the transit point for graduation into *Boko Haram*." This statement is an

31 <https://www.jibwisnigeria.org/>

32 <https://www.facebook.com/JibwisNig>

33 This is the opinion of some scholars like Professor Kyari Muhammad and Professor Muhammad Mustapha Gwadabe.

34 See note 10 above.

35 It is to be noted that Ibn Taymiyyah was often cited out of context by Yusuf and his followers.

36 Gwadabe, M. M., *Ibid*, p. 33

37 *Ibid*, p. 1

exaggeration of the true position of things because the reality is that BH members emerge from different Muslim groups in Nigeria and meet on common ideological interests which are rejected by all. Similarly, it is evident that most of the members of BH were students of the traditional Qur'anic schools (*Makarantun Allo*) who were never *Izala*.

Like other Muslim groups mentioned above, *Izala* too, is not the mother of Boko Haram in Nigeria. Notable major areas of differences between *Izala* and BH include the fact that *Izala* not only accepts secular education, but also promotes it; *Izala* accepts and obeys secular authorities and appears have little or no problem with democracy. In fact, it encourages its members to participate in elections and governance. Finally, it is evident that no Muslim group in Nigeria openly criticized, condemned and audaciously fought against the ideologies of BH like the *Izala*. It also stands a pellucid evidence that many *Izala/Salafi* scholars who were known to be outright opponents of the BH movement were assassinated in cold blood. No Muslim group in Nigeria lost its scholars to BH violence as *Izala/Salafi* movement.

BH and the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (*Shi'a*)

The Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN) was founded by Ibrahim al-Zakzaky who graduated from Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria, Kaduna in the 1970s, where he led the Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria (MSSN) and then Nigeria's Muslim Brotherhood in the early 1980s. During the Cold War period, al-Zakzaky was known for preaching Islam as an alternative model to socialism and capitalism and leading rallies where followers burned Nigeria's constitution to protest secularism and supported Iran's Islamic revolution in 1979.³⁸ After traveling to Iran in 1980, al-Zakzaky adopted the symbolism and rhetoric of *Shi'a* Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini on top of the ideology of the late Sunni Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood founder, Imam Hasan al-Banna, and Muslim Brotherhood thought leader, Sayyid Qutb. Al-Zakzaky said:

The Islamic Awakening started when Allah blessed this *Ummah* with people like Shaykh Hasan al-Banna, Maududi, Sayyid Qutb and Imam Khomeini.... But above all, the last two made the greatest impact. Sayyid Qutb made his impact ideologically, for he was executed by the tyrants before he could realize his theory. As for Imam Khomeini, he is a unique personality in the history of mankind.... This is partly because the Islamic revolution in Iran came at a time when all hopes were almost lost.³⁹

³⁸ Usman ., "Zakzaky – Ahmadu Bello University's Last Alumnus Standing," Daily Trust, December 5, 2012

³⁹See "The Islamic Awakening: Islamic Struggle, Correct Path to Lasting Success," Islamicmovement.org, undated.

Al-Zakzaky then founded the IMN and went on “recruitment tour” to northern Nigerian universities to showcase the Iranian revolution.⁴⁰ During his period of imprisonment in the mid-1980s, al-Zakzaky converted to *Shi`a* Islam and transformed the IMN from student activism to a mass movement that called for “a second jihad” to implement *Shari`a* in Nigeria.⁴¹ He also declared Nigeria’s secular government unfit to rule and the traditional Sunni leadership of Nigeria, including the sultan of Sokoto and Sufi brotherhoods, guilty of siding with the government in search of worldly pleasure.⁴² Al-Zakzaky, however, downplayed the IMN’s “Shi`a” image, choosing instead to portray it as an “Islamic movement” just like Imam Khomeini did during the Shi’a revolution in Iran.

Today, the IMN, which is commonly known in Nigeria as “the *Shi`a*” is Africa’s largest Shi’a movement.⁴³ It has mobilized significant followership especially among male and female youths for Shi’a religious events and political rallies where Khomeini and his successor, Ali Khamenei, and Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah are revered, while flags of the “Great Satan [the United States]”⁴⁴ and Israel are burned. The IMN also has hundreds of paramilitary guards called *hurras*. According to the IMN’s website:

The Guards or *hurras* is a wing in the movement responsible for ensuring proper arrangement, providing security to the members of the movement during normal activities and events that are being carried out at different times.

The Shi’a claim that the *hurras* do not bear arms (this claim can neither be confirmed nor refuted by this authors). However, it is certain that the *hurras* are a uniformed, regimented organization modeled on the Revolution Guard. The *hurras* are alleged to be violent against the neighborhood of Zakzaky’s residence. They are also notorious for blocking access roads especially in Zaria and

40 Thurston, A. “Interactions Between Northern Nigeria and the Arab World in the Twentieth Century,” Georgetown University Masters Thesis, 2009

41 Loimeier, R., *Islamic Reform and Political Change in Northern Nigeria* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1997), p. 299

42 Nalado, D. “Islamic Authority Would be Established in Nigeria,” *Islamicmovement.org*, September 22, 2010

43 Zenn, J. “The Islamic Movement and Iranian Intelligence Activities in Nigeria” October 24, 2013 available <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-islamic-movement-and-iranian-intelligence-activities-in-nigeria> accessed on 28/2/2016

44 The term “Great Satan” is a derogatory epithet for the United States that was first used by Ayatollah Khomeini in a speech on November 5, 1979. Al-Zakzaky also uses the term to refer to the United States

between Zaria and Kano and denying passers-by passage on the days of their activities. This recently led to a violent clash between the IMN and the Nigerian army.⁴⁵

The IMN has a Hausa language newspaper called *al-Mizan*, a Hausa radio station called *Shuhada* (the martyrs), an al-Zakzaky Facebook page⁴⁶, IMN Facebook page⁴⁷ and an IMN website⁴⁸ with faces of Khomeini, Khamenei and al-Zakzaky on every page. As in previous years, al-Zakzaky visited Iranian centers of Shi`a scholarship in Qom and Mashhad in 2012 and met dozens of IMN members studying in Iran.⁴⁹ He also visited Lebanon, where he received a red flag from Karbala, Iraq's Shi`a shrine of Imam Husayn, as a gift from Nasrallah, and Iraq, where he prayed at Najaf's Shi`a shrine of Imam Ali.⁵⁰

Some of the teaching of the IMN in relating secular systems and other groups include:

- a) That Nigeria's secular government is unfit to rule and the traditional Sunni leadership of Nigeria, including the sultan of Sokoto and Sufi brotherhoods, are guilty of siding with the government for worldly gain. That the constitution is a man-made law and un-Islamic. That both the authorities and the constitution should not be obeyed as they are *taghut* (idolatry or the worship of anything except Allah).
- b) That the West conspires to "dominate minds and resources" of Muslims by converting them to Christianity and secularizing them, Jews are the "lowest creatures on earth" and the "children of monkeys and pigs,"⁵¹
- c) That the West fabricated the 9/11 attacks on the United States, and the Nigerian government created Boko Haram to justify Western-Christian "occupation" of the

45 "More report on Military, Shiite Muslims clash in Kaduna" available <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2015/12/more-report-on-military-shiite-muslims-clash-in-kaduna/> accessed on 28/2/2016

46 <http://www.facebook.com/sayyidzakzaky>

47 <https://www.facebook.com/IslamicMovementInNigeria/>

48 www.islamicmovement.org

49 see www.islamicmovement.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=298:pictures-of-sheikhzakzakys-visit-to-some-places-inside-iran&catid=41:frontpage

50 Photos of al-Zakzaky's visits to Lebanon and Iraq are available at www.islamicmovement.org

51 "Highlight of Sheikh Zakzaky's Speech," July 1, 2008, available at www.sharqeyah.us/vb/showthread.php?p=238378&langid=1

Muslim world and northern Nigeria.⁵² This rhetoric appeals to broad sectors of Nigeria's Muslim population.

The IMN's rhetoric has in some cases translated into violence. In 1991, an IMN Imam in Katsina, Malam Yakubu Yahaya, led hundreds of IMN members in an attack on the office of the Daily Times newspaper after it portrayed the Prophet Muhammad in a cartoon marrying a prostitute.⁵³ In the 2000s, the IMN clashed most frequently with Sunnis in Sokoto, which is the seat of the sultan of Sokoto and where Nigerian intelligence reported that IMN established training camps for recruits from across northern Nigeria.⁵⁴ In 2005, IMN imams sought leadership positions in mosques in Sokoto, which led to violence between Sunnis and Shi'a.⁵⁵ In 2007, Nigerian security forces destroyed the IMN's headquarters in Sokoto and arrested an IMN imam after a Sunni cleric was assassinated at a mosque allegedly by the IMN in revenge for the cleric's support of the crackdown on the IMN in 2005.⁵⁶ Al-Zakzaky, however, claimed the IMN was framed to justify ousting the IMN from Sokoto.⁵⁷ In 2012, al-Zakzaky again accused the Nigerian security forces of a plot to assassinate the IMN's Imam in Yobe, Mustapha Lawan Nasidi, while Nasidi was leading prayers, but the attack failed as it killed Nasidi's brother, driver, and two people seated near him.⁵⁸ When Israeli Foreign Affairs Minister Avigdor Lieberman visited Abuja in 2009, al-Zakzaky said that Nigerian security forces targeted the IMN for Israel because "Iran is waxing stronger in Nigeria through me, and this is why they want to attack us, to finally slay the growing Iranian influence and our movement."⁵⁹ In December, 2015, a clash between the IMN and the Nigerian army over blockage of road left many people dead and the group's headquarters and the home of its leader destroyed.⁶⁰

52 Madbuga, A. "Boko Haram Creation of the West – Zakzaky," Daily Champion, September 6, 2011

53 Abubakar, A. "Boko Haram Chief Issues Video Threat Over Anti-Islam Film," Agence France-Presse, October 1, 2012

54 Olatunji, S. "Arms Stockpiling: Kaduna Police Boss, Islamic Sect on War Path," Punch, March 19, 2009

55 .Kauzare, M. U. and Mohammed, A. "Sokoto Sectarian Clash: Matters Arising," Daily Trust, June 17, 2005

56 "Nigerian Clash Over Cleric Death," BBC, July 19, 2007

57 Ibid

58 Ibid

59 "Yan Uwa Uku Ne Suka Yi Shahada Sakamakon Harin Da Sojoji Suka Kai Markaz a Potiskum," Harkar Musulunci, May 29, 2012, available at www.harkarmusulunci.org/data.asp?id=102535&lang=1

60 "More report on Military, Shiite Muslims clash in Kaduna" available <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2015/12/more-report-on-military-shiite-muslims-clash-in-kaduna/> accessed on 28/2/2016

The influence of the IMN on BH is very obvious. Muhammad Yusuf is believed to have met and followed Zakzaky before he broke away along with other members of IMN to form the JTI.⁶¹ For this reason, when he came up later to establish BH, Muhammad Yusuf built some of its ideologues on the some IMN ideas. It is clear that BH and IMN share similar doctrines, including: demonizing the United States and its allies; comparing their conflict against the Nigerian government to conflicts between the United States and Muslims in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan; viewing the secular state as “illegitimate” and the constitution as un-Islamic; blaming the “corrupt” government for poverty of the masses while proposing an Islamic system as the solution; claiming Usman Bin Fodio’s legacy; exploiting issues sensitive to Muslims; and targeting northern Nigeria’s unemployed youths for membership. In several cases, IMN members have been radicalized in the movement but then formed or joined more violent groups.⁶² One example was when a mob of former IMN members publicly beheaded a Christian Igbo trader in Kano in 1994 for allegedly desecrating the Qur’an.⁶³ In a nutshell, Zakzaky’s IMN influenced the BH in that the later adopted the same style of radical approach in preaching Islam through the declaration of the mission of revolution towards the establishment of Islamic state, revolt against the Nigerian authorities and the use of the same slogans when it comes to Nigerian political leaders such as *bara’ah* and *taghut*.

However, this does not mean that BH was born by the IMN or that there is any direct connection between the two. They remain independent and different from each other in many fundamental features and none has ever claimed or expressed support for the activity of the other. While IMN is Shi’a, BH belongs to the Sunni. BH and IMN differ in that while BH prohibits secular education, the IMN accepts it. It is to be noted that many students dropped from Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria in the late 1970s and early 1980s courtesy of the teachings of the IMN under Zakzaky. This later changed and the group accepted secular education as result of lack of option. Furthermore, whereas BH’s confrontation with the Nigerian authorities is a clear

61 Murtada, A: Boko Haram in Nigeria: Its Beginnings, Principles and Activities in Nigeria available on http://download.salafimanhaj.com/pdf/SalafiManhaj_BokoHaram.pdf accessed 14/2/2016 at 4:15pm

62 J. Zenn “The Islamic Movement and Iranian Intelligence Activities in Nigeria” October 24, 2013 available <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-islamic-movement-and-iranian-intelligence-activities-in-nigeria> accessed on 28/2/2016

63 Alemika E. and Okoye, F. “Ethno-Religious Conflicts and Democracy in Nigeria: Challenges. Kaduna, Nigeria,” Human Rights Monitor, 2002; Adamolekun Taiye, “Religious Fanaticism and Fundamentalism in Nigeria Since 1980: A Historical Perspective,” British Journal of Arts and Social Sciences 9:2 (2012)

declaration of war, most confrontations between IMN and the Nigerian authorities are through protests.

MAIN IDEOLOGIES OF BOKO HARAM AND THEIR NARRATIVES

BH understands Islam in a way that differs or even conflicts with the understanding of the majority of the Muslims in Nigeria and the world at large. The group's main ideologies are centered within five major themes, namely:

- a) *Takfir* (declaring a Muslim as an infidel);
- b) Conventional Education is forbidden;
- c) Civil service under a Secular Government is Forbidden;
- d) Democracy is Disbelief (*Taghoot*);
- e) Jihad against Non-believers is a Religious Duty

These are the major themes of the BH ideologies under which all their narratives are derived. The ideologues of the group quote verses from the Qur'an, traditions of the Prophet and juristic opinions to justify their arguments and conclusions on the above issues. The group cites most of its references out of context, interprets verses of the Qur'an and traditions of the Prophet (SAW) in a way that conflicts with the understanding of the *salaf* (pious predecessors) and misquote Muslim jurists. This brought them in conflict with majority of the Muslims, Nigerian Christians and governments.

1. *Takfir* (Declaring a Muslim as Infidel)

A critical study of Boko Haram reveals that the sect is erected upon the ideology of considering themselves as the real Muslims and that others who do not follow their way are infidels. This is why whoever contravenes their teachings is considered an unbeliever and the rulings of an apostate are applied on him. Applying the ruling of apostasy renders results in making them differ from other Muslims in passing verdicts with respect to these five issues. For instance, applying the ruling of apostasy on a Muslim that goes against their teaching renders them declare other Muslims as infidels for legitimizing a non-Islamic government; declare them infidels for legalizing study in the conventional school system; declare them infidels for embracing democracy. This conclusion renders the lives, property and dignity of other Muslims vulnerable and unprotected. Legalizing the lives of other Muslims render them kill and launch attacks on them. Legalizing other Muslims' property render them seize their property as war booties.

Legalizing other Muslims' dignity renders them to take them and their wives and daughters as war captives.

Declaration of the verdict of disbelief and apostasy on any Muslim that opposes the position of Boko Haram is not a new thing in the propagation of its ideology by their leaders. In one of his videos in 2015, the Boko Haram leader, Abubakar Shekau had this to say:

You think you are Muslims. You have established man-made laws in your cities and judge by them; you have rejected the ruling of the Qur'an; you implement the laws of Obama and Ban-ki Moon and you think you are Muslims. You are not believers even if you pray, fast, give alms (zakat) and go on pilgrimage....⁶⁴

Similarly, in one of his *tafsir* sessions, while interpreting the meaning Q 62:2, Boko Haram founder, Muhammad Yusuf said:

There are two (2) sets of people, believers and unbelievers. He (Allah) didn't say there are believers, unbelievers and the rest. It is either you are a Muslim (believer) or non-Muslim (unbeliever); either you are an upright person/believer or you are an unbeliever. These people we have killed because they chose to remain under unbelief so we killed them. It is Allah who gave us the go ahead to kill them as you have seen.

This is just an example from dozens of such narratives expressed by Muhammad Yusuf and adopted by his followers as religious ideology.

2. Conventional Education

BH forbids studying in Nigeria's educational system from primary through University level. They rely on 3 grounds to reach the above conclusion, namely:

1. The origin of the system of education
2. Mixing of genders and un-Islamic dressing in schools and
3. The content of some subjects taught in those schools.⁶⁵

The First Ground

⁶⁴ This video which entitled "Message to African Leaders" was released by the group sometime in 2015, it is mainly in Arabic, but also partly in Hausa, English and Kanuri. It is available on <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#inbox/152cc334a8445d7f?projector=1> accessed on 14/2/2016 at 8:30am

⁶⁵ Muhammad Yusuf, Abu Yusuf, *Hadhihi 'Aqeedatuna wa Manhaj Da'watina*, (Maktabah al-Ghuraba) 2nd Edn., 1430 AH), 82 - 99

BH argues that the Nigerian system of education takes its origin from Christian missionaries and European colonialists; that missionaries and colonialists established these schools and developed their curriculum to serve their interests of uprooting Muslims from their faith and corrupt their traditions. They contend that the Islamic system of education was well entrenched and deeply rooted as it was also relevant in the country before the arrival of the missionaries and colonialists. That gradually, the European system took over the Islamic system, and this, resulted in Muslims becoming disbelievers bit by bit.

The founder and first leader of BH, Muhammad Yusuf, extensively cites from the prominent Saudi scholar, Bakr Ibn Abdullah Abu Zayd's book titled "*al-Madaris al-'alamiyya al-'ajnabiyya al-'isti'mariyya: tarikhuha wa makhatiruha*" to back up his opinion.⁶⁶

The Second Ground

On the second reason, the group argues that mixing between genders (*ikhtilat*) and uncovering or wearing impermissible attire (*tabarruj*) is permitted by the system of education in Nigeria. They cite Qur'an 33:33 where Allah says: "And abide in your houses and do not display yourselves as (was) the display of the former times of ignorance" and Qur'an 24:31 where Allah says:

And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husband's fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women, or the slaves whom their right hands possess, or male servants free of physical needs, or small children who have no sense of the shame of sex;

The ideologues of BH cite the above verses and conclude that since Nigeria's educational system permits what was forbidden by Allah in the above verses by permitting unrestrained mixing of sexes and wearing revealing clothing, the entire system is un-Islamic and Muslims, males or females, are forbidden from studying in such a setting.

The Third Ground

⁶⁶Global, Foreign and Colonialist Schools: Their History and Dangers

BH's third ground for the prohibition of conventional schools is that some topics taught in the schools conflict with the teachings of Islam. BH ideologues cite Darwin's theory of evolution which they say conflicts with Qur'an 29:20 where Allah says: "Say, (O Muhammad), "Travel through the land and observe how He began creation. Then Allah will produce the final creation. Indeed, Allah, over all things, is competent". They also contend that the theory of evaporation conflicts with Qur'an 23:18 where Allah says "And We send down water from the sky according to (due) measure, and We cause it to soak in the soil; and We certainly are able to drain it off (with ease)."⁶⁷ On this, Yusuf concludes that "We, as Muslims believe that rain is from Allah and has nothing to do with the sun". The group holds that the scientific explanation that the earth is round and the one relating to development of the foetus and the solar system also conflict with Islam.⁶⁸

The current disputed leader of the group, Abubakar Shekau, on his part, while contending on the prohibition of studying in the Nigerian educational system said:

I have said repeatedly that Ibn Taymiyya has said (going to) conventional schools is worse than (going to) church.... The system has disputed everything Allah has revealed. It is in conflict with Islam on everything, even on (a small thing like) a needle. I swear by God that those who go to school do not believe in the existence of God. This is not only in sociology; it is in every subject. If they tell you otherwise, they are just trying to be clever...

He went further to cite the synopsis of a book entitled *Dafin Boko da Maganinsa* (the Poison of Conventional Education and its Cure) written by one Sanusi Iguda of Bayero University where the author said:

The philosophy of conventional education is to, at least, train a people who are African by blood and skin, but westerners by ideology, training and thinking.... Separating politics and religion, women's rights (because) God did not accord women rights, nationalism, disputing the existence of God and imitating westerners in dressing, marriage, funeral.... And finally selfishness.

⁶⁷ They also cite Qur'an 24:43 where Allah says "Art thou not aware that it is God who causes the clouds to move onward, then joins them together, then piles them up in masses, until thou canst see rain come forth from their midst? And He it is who sends down from the skies, by degrees, mountainous masses [of clouds] charged with hail, striking therewith whomever He wills and averting it from whomever He wills, [the while] the flash of His lightning well-nigh deprives [men of their] sight!".

⁶⁸ See a debate between Muhammad Yusuf and Mal. Isa Ali Pantami entitled "Muqabala" available on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h-nhmj3faHc&list=PL8CA76D74FAE6E7F5> visited on the 10/2/2016 at 9:50pm

Using the foregoing references and interpretation, BH holds the opinion that it is forbidden for any Muslim to send his child to a conventional school. This, Yusuf said, is so because these schools corrupt the faith of Muslim children by teaching them subjects, ideas and theories which conflict with Islam. They also cite the tradition in which the Prophet (SAW) was reported to have said:

No one is born except upon natural instinct, then his parents turn him into a Jew or Christian or Magian...⁶⁹

In addition to prohibiting studying in these schools, BH also warns Muslims against permitting their landed properties to be used for schools and against working in those schools; that Muslims are not permitted to teach even Islamic studies and the Qur'an in these schools; that an money earned by a Muslim from these schools is forbidden as every kind of help is also forbidden. They cite Qur'an 5:1 where Allah says: "... but do not help one another in sin and transgression."⁷⁰

3. Democracy

In his book titled: *Hadhihi Aqidatuna wa Manhaju Da'awatina*.⁷¹ Muhammad Yusuf tried to establish a verdict on the prohibition of democracy and that it is an act of infidelity, as well as the one who gets involved in it. His argument is based on a number narratives. These narratives are:

1. That democracy is an act of disbelief
2. That democracy is the modern idol
3. That democracy is a religion to its followers
4. That the origin of democracy emanated from disbelievers
5. That democracy contains rules and regulations not commanded by Allah and his messenger
6. That employing democracy signifies the belief in its authenticity
7. That the renown Islamic scholar Shaikh Ibn Uthaimin had said: "democracy means deifying the People"
8. That democracy has bestowed upon people the freedom that opposes the laws of Allah

⁶⁹ This tradition was narrated by Abu Hurairah and is reported in Sahih i as No. 1292, po Muslim as No. 2658

⁷⁰ Ibid

⁷¹ Muhammad Yusuf's book is popular amongst scholars and researchers, especially in northern Nigeria. It has been published by a local, unauthorized and unanimous publisher, during the life of the author and in the midst of his struggle for the propagation of his ideology. It contains most of the narratives on which the sect is erected. Fundamental among which are the five main narratives studied by this research, namely: jihad, conventional education, democracy, public service under a non-Muslim government and *takfeer* (declaring a Muslim as an apostate). Thus, the book will be the main reference of this research with respect to the narratives of Boko Haram without formal citation of its publication information. Due to its popularity, only the name of the book and page numbers are sufficient for those who know or have the book.

9. That democracy incorporates a system that guarantees people the authority to make their laws besides Allah
10. That democracy is built on giving preference to the majority and not to the virtuous

These are the ten main points of Muhammad Yusuf's arguments.

4. Service under a Secular Government

This point, even though is studied as a separate theme in the context of refuting BH's narratives, it can be referred to the theme of democracy since the center of their argument is that democracy is an act of disbelief, therefore, working under its system is an abetment towards the promotion of disbelief which is an act of disbelief itself.

5. *Jihad* against Unbelievers

BH divides the world into two groups: Muslims and non-Muslims. For them, the only relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims is that of constant warfare and massacre until every non-believer accepts Islam or is killed. This opinion is apparent in BH's lectures, sermons and messages.

For instance, while interpreting Qur'an 9: 8 which provides:

How (can there be a treaty) while, if they gain dominance over you, they do not observe concerning you any pact of kinship or covenant of protection? They satisfy you with their mouths, but their hearts refuse [compliance], and most of them are defiantly disobedient.

BH founder, Muhammad Yusuf said:

How could they continue telling you peace, peace; they say there is a treaty of safety between them (unbelievers) and God and His Messenger while if they gain dominance over you, they do not care about kinship or pact of safety... even if you belong to the same family, they will kill if you are a Muslim. Even if he is your father, he would kill as long as you are a Muslim.... Even if there is a treaty of safety between you, they do not care. They would kill you if they get an opportunity.⁷²

⁷²See a video entitled "Tafsirin Tauba 1 - 1, Mallam Muhammad Yusuf Maiduguri available http://int.search.myway.com/search/video.jhtml?n=782a86ac&p2=%5EHJ%5Exdm659%5ETTAB02%5Eng&pg=video&pn=1&ptb=E8756059-15B0-493C-963A-3C37180D3ADD&q=&searchfor=suratu+tawba+muhammad+yusuf+video&si=CNT6lKfh_swCFclsGwodNpsDeQ&ss=sub&st=tab&tpr=sbt&trs=wtt&pToken=CAoQAQ&ots=1488646957521

After citing some examples of Muslims whom he said were killed by non-Muslims in Maiduguri, he said: “That is why I always warn you never to relent. Do not drop your weapons” and cited Qur’an 4: 71 where Allah says “O you who have believed, take your precaution and [either] go forth in companies or go forth all together” as the justification for his warning.... “Be prepared always for if they get an opportunity, they will not let you live”. He then goes further to warn his audience “Never love them for they do not love you” and cited 60:1 where Allah says:

O you who have believed, do not take My enemies and your enemies as allies, extending to them affection while they have disbelieved in what came to you of the truth, having driven out the Prophet and yourselves [only] because you believe in Allah, your Lord. If you have come out for jihad in My cause and seeking means to My approval, [take them not as friends]. You confide to them affection, but I am most knowing of what you have concealed and what you have declared. And whoever does it among you has certainly strayed from the soundness of the way.

He then remarks “Do not love in your heart; do not show them that you love them; take them as your opponents. They are the ones that drove you and the Messenger of Allah from your city (Makkah)”. He then goes further to argue that reference to disbelievers in this verse is not restricted to the disbelievers during the Prophet’s lifetime; it extends to the unbelievers of today. He said:

This verse is referring to the disbelievers of today; they are the ones that drove the Prophet of God from their city. Aren’t they the ones drawing his cartoons (the audience answered “YES” in chorus). Therefore, if they had met him, they would have driven him out. The one that draws the cartoon of the Prophet and mocks him will drive him out if the Prophet lives in their city. Why do you then love them because they play football? Why do you love them because of democracy? Why do you love him because of films? Are you a lunatic? Someone who does love the Prophet, Muhammad, like Ronaldo, you put on his jersey.⁷³

After citing Qur’an 64:2 where Allah says “It is He who created you, and among you is the disbeliever, and among you is the believer. And Allah, of what you do, is Seeing.”, and said:

There are two (2) sets of people, believers and unbelievers. He (Allah) didn't say there are believers, unbelievers and the rest. It is either you are a Muslim (believer) or non-Muslim (unbeliever); either you an upright person/believer or you are an unbeliever. These people we have killed because they chose to remain

73 Ibid

under unbelief so we killed them. It is Allah who gave us the go ahead to kill them as you have seen.

The foregoing makes it clear that for BH, there is no any relationship between Muslims and non-Muslim except war and massacre until one eliminates the other from the surface of the earth. This is the message Shekau continues to repeat and reiterate until this day. It is also the position of the BH that every Muslim who disagrees with their interpretation of Islam or lives under a secular government is a nonbeliever who must be killed. The group views all other religious groups such as Izala, Tijjaniyya and Qadiriyya as either hypocrites or outright unbelievers. They say these groups are non-Muslims because they pay alliance to the Nigerian government and accept its system of law and democracy, all of which is Kufr. In one video message, Shekau said:

He who harms religion (Islam) should not even attempt to hide behind the veil of religion (by claiming that they are Muslims). If we identify them, by Allah, we would not let them live; we will kill them; yes I said we will kill them because, for us, killing them is (as obligatory as) praying 5 times.⁷⁴

This is further supported by the sermons of the young man cited above where he said:

There are two (2) sets of people, believers and unbelievers. He (Allah) didn't say there are believers, unbelievers and the rest. It is either you are a Muslim (believer) or non-Muslim (unbeliever); either you an upright person/believer or you are an unbeliever. These people we have killed because they chose to remain under unbelief so we killed them. It is Allah who gave us the go ahead to kill them as you have seen.

The above statements and many others indicate that every Muslim who does accept the BH's interpretation of Islam is a disbeliever and it is obligatory to kill him together with non-Muslims just as 5 daily prayers are obligatory.

THE WAY FORWARD AND COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY AHEAD

Since the inception of BH in Nigeria, there had always been serious controversies and exchange of blames and label of criticisms among different groups in Nigeria as to who is responsible for the emergence of BH. These exchanges of blames cut across all aspects of the social endeavors of Nigerians. The blames ranged from inter-religious to intra-religious, from inter-regional to

⁷⁴ See a video clip entitled "Sako Zuwa ga Jonathan 1 _ Imam Abubakar Shekau" available on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eNg73vN86K8> accessed on 14/2/2016 at 12:20pm

intra-regional, from inter-political to intra-political and from inter-cultural to intra-cultural. All these blames proved to be useless as they only add fuel to the flame of the crisis than its extinction.

Now, time has come when all Nigerians, across all faiths, sects, regions and cultures need to come together, help one another towards the extinction of BH from Nigeria for the benefit of all. Christians should not blame Muslims for BH as all the mainstream Muslim condemn violence and when more Muslims are killed by BH than others. Similarly, Muslims should not blame Christians in Nigeria as being behind the creation of BH in order to kill Muslims since no BH member has ever claimed belonging to the Christian faith. Among the various Muslim groups and sects, no group should be ascribed to BH as none of the famous groups discussed earlier supports the merciless atrocities of BH. No ethnic group should blame another as being the father of BH just because a small number of its members belong to BH. BH members are criminals like other criminals. The only difference is the motive and methodology. But a crime is always a crime, regardless of the form it takes. No ethnic group has zero record of criminals in it. Furthermore, no political party or politician should be connected with BH without a standard proof of evidence, and that can only be achieved through judicial process. No political party works for BH and BH does not work for the cause of any political party.

On the other hand, while the government intensifies its efforts towards the extinction of BH with emphasis on military approach, this is commendable, but is it not enough and can never be. BH is an ideology that developed through intellectual force, hence it cannot be confronted by military force alone. Fire cannot quench fire. The fire of the military forces can only kill a BH ideologue but cannot kill the BH ideology. The ideology can only be killed by a counter ideology. Therefore, there is need for everyone responsible to be involved in the holy cause for the extinction of BH and its ideologies.

The most important task with respect to the intellectual approach for the confrontation of the BH ideology is for all Muslim scholars and intellectuals to synergize and study the narratives and arguments of BH and come out with intellectually convincing counter narratives. BH is an enemy to all Muslim groups as it spares no group when it comes to killing of lives, destruction of property and bombardment of mosques. BH leaders and members should also be engaged in intellectual dialogues and debates for clarifications of their misconceptions about religious texts

and their applications, similar to what was done by Ali RA with the *Khawarij* of his time. It is only when this is done that war against BH can be truly won.

CONCLUSION

Boko Haram is a violent extremist Islamic organization that caused serious damage to Islam and Muslims in the name of Islam. It evolved in Maiduguri, northeastern Nigeria and later spread across the Lake-Chad region of West Africa. Its leaders and followers rely on misconceived texts of Islam and misinterpreted contexts of juristic opinions to interpret Islam in their own way, which, in their heretical view, is the true Islam. Whoever contravenes their interpretation and understanding of Islam is deemed an unbeliever and thus, an enemy whose life and property become lawful. It is based on this ideology that since 2009 when its crisis broke out, unascertained losses in lives, property and shelter were recorded. The war against BH continues hitherto. While the government is confronting the ideologues of BH through military approach, instead of the Muslims to collectively confront its ideologies through intellectual approach, many Muslim groups remain aloof throwing blames on other groups on the ground that “let he who kindled fire quench the fire”. But this notion is wrong, for when the fire goes out of control, it will not only engulf the kindler but the watcher as well. Let all Muslim groups in northern Nigeria admit that BH ideologies emerged from them collectively just as they admit that BH members are their sons and brothers. Each group had a role to play in influencing a particular ideology of BH in which that group started before BH copied and went beyond the boundaries of the group. The traditional *Mallams* were known in condemning or even prohibiting “western education” (*karatun boko*) even before BH. The Sufis were known as the giant jihadists who led the fight for the establishment of the Sokoto caliphate which the BH are striving to revive. Many Izala scholars declared *takfir* against other Muslims who do not subscribe to their creed before BH declared same against others including the Izala themselves. Zakzaky’s Shi’a are popular in their disregard of the Nigerian authorities and labeling its constitution as *taghoot* even before many BH members were born. Conclusively, it remains a collective responsibility upon all Muslim groups and their scholars to embark on thorough study of the BH ideologies and narratives with a view to finding suitable responses to them as alternative narratives for them and other Muslims with a view to wiping out the present day BH and safeguarding future generations from their heretical ideologies.